DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 161 SO 019 831

AUTHOR Schnell, James A.
TITLE The Merging of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine in China: Old Ideas Cross Culturally Communicated through New Perspectives.
PUB DATE Jun 87
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Exchange; Culture Contact; Foreign Countries; *Medical Evaluation; *Medical Research; *Medical Services
IDENTIFIERS *China; *Traditional Healing

ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural communication between China and the West, instigated in 1979 by the establishment of an open-door policy in China, has led to the merging of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with the medical practices of the West. The result of these medical exchanges is a blending of medical practices that proves to be more effective in the treatment of health problems than either could accomplish singly. These collaborative efforts are encouraged by such publications as the "Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine," founded in 1981, the first Chinese periodical on TCM published in English, and various symposia held in both the West and China. While many Chinese and Western ideas relating to medicine are fundamentally foreign to each other (Yin and Yang, blood transfusion), the benefits to be derived from this blending of approaches to health care are well worth the efforts required for mutual understanding. A bibliography is included. (PPB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED306161

THE MERGING OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AND WESTERN MEDICINE IN CHINA: OLD IDEAS CROSS-CULTURALLY COMMUNICATED THROUGH NEW PERSPECTIVES

James A. Schnell
Assistant Professor
University of Cincinnati

The author was a visiting professor at Northern Jiaotong University (Beijing, The People's Republic of China) between March-June 1987.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
JAMES A. SCHNELL

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO019831

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE MERGING OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AND WESTERN MEDICINE IN CHINA: OLD IDEAS CROSS-CULTURALLY COMMUNICATED THROUGH NEW PERSPECTIVES

The People's Republic of China is engaged in reforms which involve development of its econmic, cultural, educational, and political processes. The need for reform has been realized as China has fallen behind the development of the western world in many areas. China closed its doors to the outside world in 1949 and it experienced limited interaction with the outside world until reform began in 1979.

The cultural revolution (1966-1976) was especially hard on development in China. During this period political upheaval discouraged, and in some cases banned, technological developments. Since 1979 though, China has focused considerable emphasis on developing itself and promoting more interaction with the western world.

One of the many areas which has received modernization efforts is medicine. The medical treatment in China is based on the practices of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Traditional Chinese Medicine has evolved during China's long history which dates back over 700,000 years.

The effectiveness of TCM has not been questioned but Chinese physicians have sought to better understand TCM by seeking interaction with western physicians. The intended result being that both Chinese and western medical practices can be enhanced through cross-cultural collaboration.

In September 1981, the Journal of Traditional Chinese

Medicine was founded by the All-China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The journal was the first english periodical of Traditional Chinese Medicine published in China.

In the first issue Cui Yueli, President of the All-China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine, states "Traditional Chinese Medicine is not a treasure belonging to the Chinese people alone, but it is an integral part of world civilization and a common benefit for all mankind . . . . (All Chinese-Western collaboration has) shown more satisfactory results than could have been expected with either western or traditional Chinese medicine alone."[1]

Traditional Chinese Medicine has proven to be effective within the Chinese culture and some practices have been exported to western nations. One such example is acupuncture. Although Chinese practitioners are confident in their methods, and they have little problem explaining "how" the procedures are to be performed, they have expressed difficulty explaining "why" the procedures are effective.

Interaction with western physicians provides a climate whereby western physicians can learn more about "how" and "why" the procedures are effective. Thus, through the merging of TCM and western medicine, old ideas are being cross-culturally communicated through new perspectives. This paper will discuss how considerations affecting the

aforementioned merging have evolved since the open-door reforms were initiated by The People's Republic of China in 1979.

Dr. Yue Meizhong, Vice-President of the Chinese Medical Association, offered the following poem in the first issue of the Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

> When prejudice is cast away
> The mind becomes tranquil,
> Fair comments may then be appreciated.
> More beautifully will flowers bloom
> After the trees receive transplantations.
> Knowledge will be widened
> With the exchange of academic thoughts.
> Wisdom belonging to mankind
> Cannot be divided according to nations.
> One cannot be a good physician
> Without ceaselessly absorbing new things.
> Our art through thousands of years
> Is highly valued by others,
> And theirs by us.
> Heavy are our responsibilities
> To inherit and develop[2]

Interaction between Chinese physicians and western physicians has increased significantly since the opening of China. Dr. Xie Zhufan, head of Traditional Chinese Medicine at Beijing Medical College, lectured and did research on the integration of TCM and western medical systems during a six month period in 1981.[3] This is recognized as one of the seeds of the many exchanges which have occurred since.

A symposium sponsored by France's International Health Centre, held in April, 1987, exemplifies the many medical exchanges which have occurred during the 1980's. A Chinese delegation met with government officials from ten western

European nations during the three day symposium. "They had an indepth exchange of views on Western and Chinese traditional medicine, their different viewpoints and methods, and their past development and present state. They also explored fresh channels for greater cooperation in the field."[4]

Traditional Chinese Medicine is a legacy composed of centuries of experiences by the Chinese in dealing with disease. These experiences have evolved into a unique system of theories and beliefs. A discussion of medical exchange between China and the west must consider fundamental ideas of TCM which are foreign to western medicine. The Yin and Yang and the five elements exemplify such ideas.

Yin and Yang holds that everything in the universe is composed of two opposite aspects which are constantly interdependent and in conflict. Water and fire symbolize basic properties of Yin and Yang. "That is to say, the basic properties of Yin stimulate those of water, including coldness, downward direction, dimness, etc. while the basic properties of Yang are like those of fire, including heat, upward direction, brightness, etc."[5]

The theory of the five elements maintains that wood, fire, earth, metal and water are the basic materials which comprise the physical world. A relationship of interdependence and interrestraint exists among these elements. A fundamental premise of Traditional Chinese Medicine is to

"classify natural phenomena, tissues and organs of the human body and human emotions, into different categories and to interpret the relationship between human physiology and pathology and the natural environment with the law of the interpromoting, interacting, overacting, and counteracting of the five elements."[6] This premise is central to their medical practice.

The merging of TCM with western medicine has been done effectively in a variety of areas.

> They have used combined Chinese and western medical means to treat acute abdomens, bone fractures, arthritis, soft tissue trauma, coronary heart disease. . . . All have shown more satisfactory results than could have been expected with either western or traditional Chinese medicine alone. At the same time a deeper insight has been gained into the nature of certain diseases and the mechanisms for recovery.[7]

The practice of acupuncture, the 3,000 year old Chinese practice of using needles to treat a wide range of illnesses, by western physicians has received much attention in the past decade. Acupuncture is now taught in the west. The Hwa To Acupuncture Centre, in the Netherlands, was the first school in the west to grant full Chinese diplomas for acupuncture study. "The object of the whole exercise is to come to a synthesis of western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine in the hope it benefits patients" says Henk Termeulen, director of the Centre.[8]

The combining of Traditional Chinese Medicine and western medicine has also been used for patients with

orthopaedic problems. Wang Congshu, president of Baoding Orthopaedics Rehabilitation Hospital, cures orthopaedic illnesses "by using qigong--or Chinese traditional breathing exercises--combined with other Chinese traditional and western methods."[9] Benefits of combining approaches have also been realized in the radiation treatment of cancer[10] and the removal of gallstones.[11]

Concern with the connection between mental well being and physical well being has received increased emphasis in the U.S. in the past 20 years. A similar emphasis has occurred in China. The Sino-Japan Friendship Hospital, founded in 1984, bases its approaches on western and TCM. Cheng Lirong, a nurse at the hospital, reports "One characteristic of nursing is 'emotion nursing,' similar to psychological nursing in the west."[12] It is believed seven emotional factors (joy, anger, melancholy, brooding, sorrow, fear, and shock) can cause disease.

The merging of TCM with western medicine has produced many benefits but there have been problems which have hindered the process. "Differences in historical backgrounds and language barriers still place some limits on international academic exchange concerning traditional Chinese medicine and integrated Chinese and western medicine. This is particularly so in the west, where many medical workers are unfamiliar with traditional Chinese medicine."[13]

Cultural norms have also hindered the exchange of

medical practices. Blood transfusions have become more common in China "but it is still difficult to find enough donors because of a traditional Chinese fear of losing blood" reports Xing Lixiang, a senior official of the Beijing Blood Centre.[14]

Yu Fangquing, director of the maternity ward at Beijing Hospital for Gynaecology and Obstetrics, points out many women are relunctant to use new practices based on scientific approaches. "They stick to their old-fashioned teachings of their mothers or in-laws and make a list of taboos after delivery--abstaining from taking a bath, cleaning their teeth, eating fruits and getting out of bed within one month of delivery. Babies are completely bound up for one month."[15]

Another consideration which directly contrasts with practices in the west deals with wages for physicians and health care staff. Chinese physicians and health care staff make far less money. "A doctor in Beijing's Chaoyang Hospital has to see up to 60 patients a day, but gets a monthly wage of less than 80 yuan ($21 U.S.)."[16] This amount is less than the wage of teachers in China, which is another low paying occupation. Thus, one can safely assume the health care field is valued differently than it is in the United States (where medical doctors make much more money proportionate to their counterparts in China).

The merging of TCM with western medicine in China

exemplifies a situation where old ideas are cross-culturally communicated through new perspectives. That is, Chinese medical approaches are explained through western perspectives. Though there are hinderances within this process, the benefits have been viewed as being well worth the costs (obstacles which have been encountered). This paper has served to describe the benefits of such interaction, and some of the problems which have arisen, in hopes of better understanding a process which can continue to improve health care practices around the world.

Notes

[1]Yueli, C. "A Welcome Event in International Academic Exchange on Traditional Chinese Medicine," Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No. 1) September, 1981, p. v.

[2]Meizhong, Y. "To My Colleagues," Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No. 1) September, 1981, p. i.

[3]"Dr. Kie Zhufan Invited to Lecture in USA," Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No. 2) December, 1981, p. 97.

[4]"East-West Work Urged in Medicine," China Daily (April 6, 1987), p. 4.

[5]"Lectures on Essentials of Traditional Chinese Medicine,"

Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No.1) September, 1981, p. 73.

[6]"Lectures on Essentials of Traditional Chinese Medicine," Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No. 1) September, 1981, p. 77.

[7]Yueli, C. "A Welcome Event in International Academic Exchange on Traditional Chinese Medicine," Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No. 1) September, 1981, p. v.

[8]"Chance Meeting Spawns Acupuncture Centre," China Daily (April 22, 1987) p. 1.

[9]"Old and New Combine to Heal," China Daily (May 14, 1987) p. 6.

[10]"China Leads in Cancer Treatment," China Daily (April 28, 1987), p. 3.

[11]"Shock Waves Remove Gallstones," China Daily (April 8, 1987), p. 5.

[12]Jianhua, A. "Nurse Tailors Her Care," China Daily, (April 6, 1987) p. 6.

[13]Yueli, C. "A Welcome Event in International Academic Exchange on Traditional Chinese Medicine," Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Vol. 1, No. 1) September, 1981, p. v.

[14]Tingting, Z. "Blood Donors Get New Incentives," China Daily (April 20, 1987) p. 3.

[15]Manhong, S. "Teaching Science of Nurture," China

Daily (April 16, 1987) p. 5.

[16]Guanfeng, C. "Top Expert Warns of Shortage of Doctors," China Daily (March 31, 1987) p. 1.